

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 2017

The Honorable John Carter, Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
B-307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Carter and Ranking Member Roybal-Allard:

As you begin work on the fiscal year 2018 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, we strongly urge you to provide at least \$405 million for the AFG Grant Program and \$405 million for the SAFER Grant Program, respectively.

Through the Committee's past efforts, we have demonstrated Congress' strong bipartisan support for the AFG Grant program, as well as its understanding of the contributions this program has made to our firefighters and the communities they serve. This program has had a profound impact on public safety by providing nearly \$7 billion since 2001 for infrared cameras, personal protective gear, hazmat detection devices, improved breathing apparatuses, and interoperable communications systems. This is the basic equipment our fire departments need to effectively respond to all hazards that a firefighter may face on any given call.

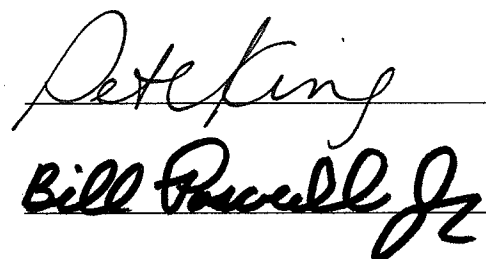
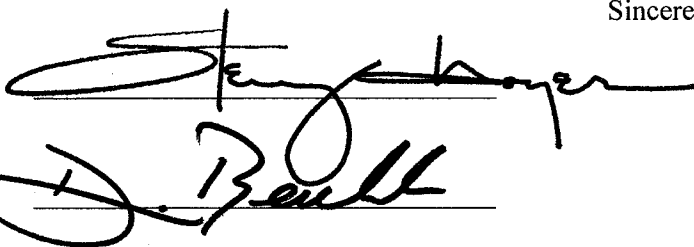
The SAFER program provides much-needed resources for career and volunteer fire departments across the nation to hire new firefighters and recruit and retain firefighters. This program is critical to the thousands of fire stations across the country that are currently operating short of staff and with limited funding. When adequately funded, SAFER will bring or maintain our nation's fire departments to staffing levels that will improve the safety of our firefighters, as well as the communities they serve, as they respond to the scene of a fire, auto accident, or other natural or manmade disasters. As you well know, the SAFER program complements the very successful Assistance to Firefighters Grant program, through which the federal government provides funds for training and equipment to fire departments throughout the country. Ensuring that career and volunteer departments have adequate numbers of firefighters will allow departments to fully utilize the training and equipment funds provided through the FIRE Grant program.

However, the nearly \$3 billion in applications submitted on average annually demonstrate that there is a great deal of work to be done before all of our communities are sufficiently served by first responders who are well equipped and trained to the highest standard.

When accounting for inflation, the AFG and SAFER programs have experienced a reduction in real dollars, at a time when the economy is still recovering, and costs of personnel, apparatus and training continue to rise. We ask far too many of our firefighters to risk their lives in our defense every day, too often with insufficient staffing, inadequate training and aging or obsolete equipment. We, as a nation have an obligation to provide them the necessary resources to perform their jobs as safely and effectively as possible. We urge you to help Congress meet that obligation by funding the Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) Grant Program and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Program at \$405 million each in the FY2018 Homeland Security Appropriations bill.

We thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Anna Adams	J. Pante	Elizabeth H. Esty
Barbara Comstock	Frank Pallone Jr.	Ted W. Lien
Don Satt	Eric G. Shoo	Val B. Deonip
John _____	Joyce Beaddy	Tom O'Hallman
Em Small	Glenn G. Thompson	DW _____
Debbie Dingell	Mark _____	Rysz Estelle
Arcy E. Plaskett	John Lewis	Franklin J. J. J.
Will _____	A. David McEan	Jay Z
Neal _____	Charlie _____	Jamie Fashin
(80 Km)	_____	Jim W. Brown
Suzanne Branci	_____	_____
Martha McSally	Michelle Lujan Grifflin	Claudia Cruz
Dr. Guffner	Mile Thompson	Raja _____
Michael E. Caputo	Debbie Wasserman Schultz	Pete Sessions
Ben N. Lyon	Ann E. Quinlan	David B. Miller
Darrell H. Cilline	Collen C. Peterson	Patrick Meehan
Pat Welch	Nydia Velaz	Jon Courtney

Bill Johnson

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Paul Lillo

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James Carter

Bruce Lawrence

Bruce

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Am. B.

Bradley Scott Schneider

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M V

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W

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Steph

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Tommy J. Jones

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Daniel T. Kiehn

W

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Lov Barletta

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